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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7446
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EAP/MLS, IO, AND ISN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PARM KNNP CB

SUBJECT: CAMBODIAN REACTION TO NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR TEST

REF: A. A) STATE 169418

1B. B) MANILA 4312

11. (SBU) On October 12, then-Charge and Pol/Econ Chief met with MFA Secretary of State Ouch Borith to deliver reftel A demarche points as well as provide a copy of President Bush's October 9 statement. With respect to North Korean actions, Borith assured us that the RGC condemned the nuclear test. PM Hun Sen had joined with Australian PM Howard in a strong public condemnation of North Korea's actions, and both leaders called for the United Nations to urgently address the issue. Borith apologized for any confusion regarding the Cambodian government's position that may have arisen as a result of earlier press statements by Minister of Information and RGC official spokesperson Khieu Kanharith. Kanharith was quoted in the October 10 edition of the Cambodia Daily newspaper as saying that Cambodia maintained a neutral stance regarding the reported test. Although Cambodia is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Cambodia also is against aggression towards North Korea and opposes any military solution, he added. In a separate interview with AFP, Kanharith urged the U.S. to officially declare that there would be no military strike against North Korea.

12. (SBU) Borith said that he contacted Kanharith following the Cambodia Daily story and questioned him regarding the remarks. Kanharith reportedly offered that he had been misquoted. Borith noted that he urged Kanharith to contact the Cambodia Daily and demand that they publish a clarification. (Note: Following an unrelated October 11 meeting at the MFA where Pol/Econ Chief learned that Kanharith's remarks had not been cleared within the government, the Embassy contacted Kanharith on October 11 to verify what had been said. Kanharith explained he had been misquoted and planned to seek a correction. End Note.) Borith went on to stress that Cambodia's position on UN issues related to nonproliferation matters is clear, and Cambodia opposes nuclear proliferation; the RGC is not neutral on the North Korean issue.

13. (SBU) When asked if ASEAN planned to issue a joint message regarding the nuclear test, Borith provided a copy of the draft text being circulated by the Philippines (reftel B), adding that Cambodia supported the text without changes. Borith cautioned that other ASEAN members may try to alter the text and whatever final statement is issued could be different, but Cambodia is fine with the text as it stands.

MUSSOMELI